



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## School Committee Minutes 12-19-2002

*Arlington School Committee*

*Regular Meeting*

*Wednesday, December 19, 2001*

*7:30 PM*

**Present:**      *Joani LaMachia, Chair*      *Suzanne Owayda*  
                  *David McKenna, Vice Chair*      *Paul Schlichtman*  
                  *Denis Sullivan, Secretary*      *Martin Thrope*  
                  *Barbara Goodman*

**Superintendent**      *Kathleen Donovan*

**Chief Financial Officer**      *David Kale*

**Asst. Supt. Curriculum**      *Joanne Gurry*

**Director Special Education**      *Marilyn Bisbicos*

*Call to order: 7:40 pm*

### Public Participation

*None*

### Secretary's Report

*Mr. Sullivan reviewed correspondence*

### School Committee Appointment of Ottoson Focus Group

*Ms. LaMachia announced that school committee members Barbara Goodman and David McKenna volunteered to serve on the screening committee for the Ottoson Principal position.*

*Supt. Donovan has appointed John Burns as interim principal at the Ottoson Middle School. Mr. Burns has 13 years experience as a middle school principal and has served as interim principal at both the Brackett and Hardy Schools.*

### Budget Timetable /Process

*Chief Financial Officer David Kale reviewed the preliminary FY2003 budget estimates. The finance committee is proposing a 2.6% increase for the school budget however present level cost increases are somewhere between 5 & 6%. Mr. Kale explained some of the cost increases that drive the school dept. budget: 1) salary increases, step increases, and degree increments for staff which amounts from \$1 million to \$1.2 million, 2) increases in the tuition for outside placements in Special Education are somewhere between \$500,000.00 to \$650,000.00. 3) transportation costs during the renovating of the Dallin School could cost somewhere between \$34,000 and \$68,400 since students will be housed in up to four different schools 4) with the new Hardy School and the Pierce School opening we are looking at energy cost increases of between \$175,000.00 and \$ 250,000.00.*

*Mr. Kale identified a budget reduction worksheet to the Committee and requested ideas and recommendations for reductions in the budget to help to save money. Mr. Kale continued that the administration, teachers, support staff have met and received all this information. After discussion the general consensus of the Committee was to develop several budgets for information purposes to present to the Community.*

*Create an "ideal budget" showing how we can make progress on our goals*

*A "status quo" budget that maintains our current programs*

*A budget without additional revenues that highlights necessary personnel/program cuts. Both Mr. Schlichtman and Ms. Goodman noted that we need to put a face on the budget and show the major drawbacks to scaling back programs and that the public should know what we could do more with resources. Ms. Owayda pointed out that after witnessing classes go down in size it would be discouraging to see them on the rise again. Mr. Thrope requested an annotated copy of the 2001/2002 budget to see exactly what we are cutting out.*

Mr. Kale did emphasize that this is the beginning of the budget process and that the town will continue to work on reducing their shortfall

### **Timeline for Goals Subcommittee**

Mrs. Donovan will send letters to members of the goals subcommittee with a schedule of meetings in January. Meetings are tentatively set for January 7, 9, 14, and 20 from 7:00 - 9:00PM. Because Special Town Meeting reconvenes on January 14th, that meeting may be rescheduled. Suzanne Owayda and Paul Schlichtman will represent the School Committee at those meetings.

### **Subcommittee Report**

- .. **Policy & Procedures** - Mr. Thrope reported that at its meeting of December 13th the subcommittee took the following actions:
  - .. reviewed corrected policy pages from MASC.
  - .. **A change in policy KEB-R that will need to be voted at the next meeting**
  - .. **Discussed school safety**
  - .. **Will send agendas directly to student advisory committee**
  - .. **A calendar driven policy tickler list will maintained in the school committee office**
  - .. **E mails between public officials should be copied to the central office/archives; the chair along with the superintendent will designate a central repository. Queries from Mr. Sprague should be copied to the school committee office**
  - .. **Decided to review the policy manual on an ongoing basis**
  - .. **Policies to be reviewed-Pesticides KHC, EBAB, web filtering, JEB, JF,**
  - .. **Town by-laws, article 7**

Ms. LaMachia formally referred to the subcommittee policy EBAB policy on pesticide and JEB kindergarten entrance date.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan

Voted to refer policy File EBAB pesticide use in School Facilities, File JEB kindergarten entrance age and file JF school admissions to the subcommittee for review.

The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for January 3, 2002.

### **Superintendent's Report**



**Kindergarten Meetings** - Supt. Donovan reported on the kindergarten meeting at Town Hall and the forum held at the Hardy School. Both meetings were well attended. Mrs. Donovan stated that parents generally were not opposed to changing the kindergarten date (from 5 by December 31st to 5 by August 31st) but were concerned about the timing of the change. Most parents were not in favor of a date change for September 2002 and voiced concern over students already in preschool who would be affected. The committee referred the issue to the policy & procedure subcommittee.

.. **Safety Update** – Mrs. Donovan reported that all of the elementary schools and the Ottoson Middle School are currently locked. The Peirce school will have a camera at the back of the building where the playground will be located.

.. **Safety Committee at AHS** Steve Woodcock reviewed the steps taken to date by the AHS Safety Committee.

- .. **Solicited faculty to list their concerns on building safety**
- .. **Evaluated staff concerns**

.. **Created a goal to reduce unrestricted access into AHS during school hours**

.. **To submit the final plan with improvements/recommendations to the Superintendent and the School Committee for approval.**

.. **Disseminate plan information to staff, students, etc.**

.. **The plan would lock all doors to the high school after the start of school approximately at 8:15 am. The majority of students would not be affected and the doors would be able to be opened from the inside. The purpose is to reduce unrestricted access to the high school once students are in the building; to have one entrance so that we know who is here.**

Some members of the committee voiced concern over reading the proposed changes in the newspaper before being informed directly and not having information available to answer questions from the community. The committee requested prior knowledge/ information before reading it in the newspaper.

Mr. Woodcock emphasized the fact that the Arlington Advocate had not contacted him directly and that his intent was to have the information process complete and to have a preliminary plan to submit to the school committee for their consideration for approval.

Mr. Schlichtman noted that Mr. Woodcock was bringing the building into compliance with our policy and should be commended for doing so.

### **Accreditation Update of AHS**

Steve Woodcock updated the Committee on the accreditation timeline. He stated that the Steering Committee began meeting in December of 2000. Committee assignments were given out in May 2001, the steering committee developed a mission statement that was approved by the faculty in November 2001. Mr. Woodcock included a draft to the committee for their consideration and vote at the next school committee meeting. There are three early release days scheduled from January through May for staff to complete their work. The Site visit is scheduled for November 2002.

### **Report of PTBC**

Mr. Thrope reported that the second floor slab has been poured and tarps have been placed around the Peirce School to prepare for inclement weather. He stated that the school is on schedule and is expected to open on time.

Mr. Thrope proposed that the School Committee vote on maximum student capacity on the remaining three schools.

Mr. Thrope moved that the enrollments of 380 at the Dallin School, 300 at the Thompson School and 325 at the Stratton School.

*On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. McKenna it was  
Voted to table the discussion until the first meeting in January. Unanimous  
Committee members stated that they were not prepared to take a vote without back up material and ample time to examine said material. The committee will revisit the issue at the next meeting.*

#### **Special Education Update**

*Dr. Bisbicos shared some of the upcoming changes due to the new State regulations in the special education:*

- “ The Circuit breaker formula for reimbursement for special education (was scheduled to go into effect in 2003 but is now on hold)*
- “ The special education standard will change. Massachusetts has used as a guideline in special education the **maximum feasible benefit** for the past 17 years – the criteria used was when evaluating a student in providing services (the services had to provide the maximum benefit feasible)*
- “ The rest of the country follows the federal law that is called FAPE (**free appropriate public education**). Starting January 1st Massachusetts will comply to the federal standard, Dr. Bisbicos sees very little change with the new regulations, children will continue to receive the services that they currently have.*
- “ Each district must create a Curriculum Accommodation Plan*
- “ The DOE has identified the principal as the leader responsible for instructional support services in his/her building. Part of that responsibility is to develop a plan on how all students will have access to the general curriculum.*

*The Curriculum accommodation plan was referred to the Specialized Student Services Subcommittee for review.*

#### **Transfer Of Funds To Special Education**

*Mr. Kale reviewed the special education tuition costs explaining that there is currently a \$497,498.00 shortfall. Mr. Kale expects to close the shortfall through reimbursements from Medicaid, a \$200,000.00 LABBB credit, \$85,000.00 in special education grant money and requested a transfer of \$109,660.00 from the salaried account to the non salary special education fund. Current year balances or reductions in projected special education tuition contracts will cover the remaining shortfall.*

*On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was*

*Voted to transfer \$109,660.00 from salaried accounts to non-salary special education tuition fund. Roll Call: Unanimous*

#### **New Business**

- “ Supt. Donovan gave members an opportunity to view signage for the Ottoson Middle School created by Ottoson parent Sharon Stafford. The Superintendent does not believe that the proposal will be funded through the Capital Planning Committee and suggested that alternative funding be explored.*
- “ Mrs. Donovan will ask the committee to vote for a tuition increase at Menotomy Preschool at the next meeting.*
- “ Mr. Schlichtman announced that the next MASC Division II meeting would take place at the Hardy School on January 30, 2002.*

*The executive session grievance hearing was postponed to the January 8, 2002 meeting.*

*On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was*

*Voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:15 PM*